

The Director of Central Intelligence

EX # 78-5709/1A

Approved For Release 2004/10/12 : CIA-RDP81M00980R002300060078-6

DEC # 78-2110/A

GAO

30 June 1978

Clearance

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Honorable Elmer B. Staats
Comptroller General of the
United States
General Accounting Office
Washington, D. C. 20548

Dear Elmer:

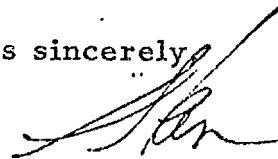
As a result of your June 1, 1978 letter and our recent informal discussions on the subject, I have reexamined our current policy with respect to providing you and members of your organization with access to sensitive intelligence information. While I can understand your point of view with respect to GAO needs for such information I feel I must maintain at least for the time being, the policy which I have previously adopted in this matter.

I have reached this decision only after extensive discussions with my colleagues and considerable in-depth thought on the subject. In light of the damage to intelligence activities that has been caused by the numerous leaks of sensitive intelligence information which have occurred recently, I feel my responsibilities as the Director of Central Intelligence to protect intelligence sources and methods compel me to reach this conclusion. I do not mean to imply that the leaks have come from GAO and I appreciate your concern with and your efforts to ensure that information in the possession of GAO is appropriately safeguarded. However, as you know, the probability of leaks occurring of sensitive intelligence information is directly related to the number of people having access to such information and I feel I must do all within my power to restrict the dissemination of such information in all branches of Government.

I will continue to study the matter to see if some method can be found whereby each of our responsibilities can be adequately fulfilled, but at this time I feel I must maintain the present policy.

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Yours sincerely,



STANSFIELD TURNER

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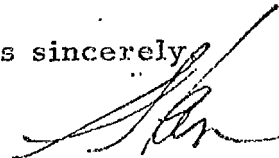
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OLC/THW:ndl (15 Jun 78)

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

Executive Registry
78-5709
OAC 78-2116

June 1, 1978

Admiral Stansfield Turner
Director, Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D. C. 20505

Dear Admiral Turner:

This letter is in further reference to informal discussions with you and Frank Carlucci as to the General Accounting Office's need for access to sensitive intelligence information and possible arrangements that would be mutually agreeable to permit both GAO and the intelligence community to fulfill their respective statutory responsibilities. I would like to share with you some of my thoughts and suggestions on how we might work more closely together when the need arises.

As you know, our experience in reviewing intelligence activities has over the years largely arisen from matters not directly related to intelligence collection, analysis, or dissemination. Instead, our experience has resulted from our need to corroborate information received from various agencies whose activities we were reviewing. Such activities have included defense procurements, international narcotics control, and matters in international trade and economies, among others. The second principal source of experience in this area resulted from a series of reviews conducted in response to congressional requests. With the creation of the permanent Select House and Senate Intelligence Committees, prospects for more congressional requests have increased.

As I mentioned to Mr. Carlucci, in reviewing Defense, NASA, State, and other programs for efficiency and effectiveness, as we are required by law to do, it is essential for us to have corroborative information that is available only within the intelligence community. In some instances intelligence material is an integral part of the files with which we must work. Without access to this material it would literally be impossible to carry out our responsibilities. We therefore need to maintain a line of communication and access that will permit us to consider all available information when making these reviews. Without such information we obviously run the serious risk of issuing less than complete and accurate reports. This is not to say that we will publish highly sensitive intelligence information in our reports, but we will at least have the benefit of knowing the full story in deciding what our positions should be and what we should and should not print.

As a practical matter, I know that protecting intelligence sources and methods is one of your most, if not the most, important concerns. Having worked with the budget of the intelligence community for several years while I was with the then Bureau of the Budget and having been responsible for dealing with highly classified material during my 12 years as Comptroller General and 5 years with the National Security Council, I fully appreciate your concern. Therefore, I have several suggestions that hopefully can form the basis for further discussion and ultimate agreement on working arrangements.

First, I will become personally involved in approving requests made by the General Accounting Office for compartmented intelligence information as well as requests for the necessary clearances. In my absence, Mr. Robert F. Keller, Deputy Comptroller General, will perform this function. As you know, I have already established a central point of liaison between GAO and the Central Intelligence Agency in the person of Mr. Frank Conahan, Associate Director of our International Division. His counterpart for liaison with your Agency is the Office of Legislative Counsel. I would propose to continue this central liaison arrangement, but of course with more direct involvement by myself and Mr. Keller.

There are a number of additional matters we would be willing to do to insure a mutually acceptable working arrangement. These could include formally, or informally, notifying you of work that will involve the intelligence community, including its scope, objectives, timeframes, type of information needed, and places and people we would want to visit. Maintaining close coordination with your designated liaisons during each review would be required. Furnishing draft reports for your classification, as well as for program review and comment, would be standard operating procedure. I might also reemphasize that a request for and use of documents during our work does not necessarily mean that information in the documents will be included in our final report. We would anticipate that in each case agreement would be reached on the extent to which sensitive material is to be included in our reports. Of course, your program comment and suggestions will also be made part of each GAO final report.

The above suggestions do not fully address the primary question of how we can be sure that sensitive intelligence information will not be released or otherwise compromised. I think a satisfactory answer to this question will require our collective thinking and I look forward to working together toward establishing formalized protection mechanisms. I would like to offer a few thoughts, however.

In the past we have agreed not to remove any intelligence documents from the premises of the agency involved. In other cases we have accepted briefings on the information we needed and only made spot checks of the supporting documentation to assure ourselves that the briefing information

was supportable. In other instances we have deposited all our working papers, draft reports, and final reports with the intelligence agency involved. This precluded release of such information without the knowledge and consent of that agency. Other alternatives to insure protection of information contained in GAO reports are possible and we are open to your suggestions.

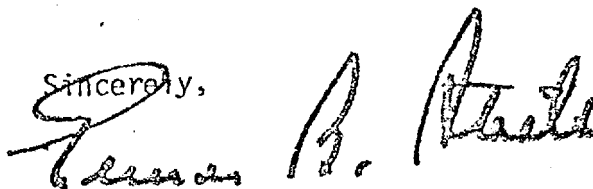
You may also be interested in how GAO would respond to requests from the Congress and its committees. As I mentioned earlier, one source by which we do reviews involving the intelligence community is the congressional request. I realize that there is no consensus on which committees of the Congress are entitled to intelligence information. However, we would attempt to perform work requested by committees that claim jurisdiction. Whether they have jurisdiction, and therefore access, would have to be worked out between you and the requesting committee before we would proceed. An extension of this is that GAO might receive requests from committees or Members to obtain intelligence documents or files which you otherwise may refuse to provide to such requesters. It is our policy not to serve as a conduit for such information and we will advise such requesters to deal directly with you and your offices in such cases.

In considering the above thoughts and suggestions, I would like to refer you to the "Hearing before the Select Committee on Intelligence, U.S. House of Representatives, Ninety-Fourth Congress, First Session, July 31, August 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, 1975, PART I." I believe this print puts into perspective GAO's past and prospective role in reviewing intelligence information.

I will be more than happy to meet with you and Frank to discuss these or other suggestions as to ways in which we can reach a mutually agreeable understanding. It is important that we do so.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,



Comptroller General
of the United States